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Role of Harikatha In Development Communication: A Study

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Introduction:

Folk art is an ornament of our cultural heritage. India has a great treasure of folk and traditional art forms right from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and Maharashtra to Northeast. These show its socio-religious and philosophical dimension woven artistically and aesthetically into a life experience, presented in a creative and innovative manner. Storytellers, singers, minstrels and other kinds of folk entertainers have acted for centuries as sources for the transmission and dissemination of news and information through face-to-face live communication. Families, social groups and community gatherings served as the main flora of communication and sources for feedback for the folk performers. The values, attitudes, beliefs and culture of the people are propagated, reinforced and perpetuated through these folk forms. The issues in a society are depicted in the form of satire by the folk artists for curing societal evils. Among folk arts, *Harikatha* has been used for both conveying information and entertainment.

The village people of those days spent their times usefully and purposefully. The labourer in agricultural fields and in rural industries sang songs to overcome the weariness of their work. These were known as folklore. Folklore is a medium through which the soul of a people expresses itself colourfully. In such creation, they find an artistic fulfillment and entertainment combining with dance that is called folk art. Folk art differs from primitive art in its outlook and character. It comes into being after a culture begins to sophisticate, taking shape in various styles and techniques. It does not involve any formal training. The children pick up the song and dance as they pick up their language. The needs and peculiar problems of the village people's life find an expression in folk art. Their daily life is full of religious customs and

ceremonies. Myths and legends are required to be illustrated interestingly and conveyed to the public. Children require toys and dolls to play with. Changing tastes of women are to be satisfied with new types of ornaments. Shrines and idols are to be built. While satisfying the needs of the people, folk art attains a certain aesthetic level. Folk art has its own individuality and character and it exists by its intrinsic merit i.e., flight of fancy of the artist, its symmetrical form, rhythm of design and efficient workmanship. Materials used in folk art are local and not imported from outside. Folk art is closely connected with the soil, linked up with the customs and belief of the people. It is in no way art for art's sake. It is utilitarian in outlook and is based on the socio-religious life of the people. It is anonymous and its origin cannot be traced to any particular period. Over all, Folk art is a higher form of culture in comparison to primitive art.

Objectives of the study:

The main objective of this study was to find out possibility of *Harikatha* as medium of development communication with special reference to Shimoga district in Karnataka. Other objectives of this study were to understand the characteristics of *Harikatha* as a medium of communication, to analyse *Harikatha* programmes of development communication, to know use of *Harikatha* in mass media and lastly to find out problems and prospects of *Harikatha* artists.

Method of study:

The researcher has used interview and survey method for this study. He interviewed *Harikatha* artists like *G.R. Keshav Sharma, S.S Shivanda Shasthri, Shankrappa Shasthri and Hallappai Shastri*. He prepared a questionnaire and made survey of 30 audience. The secondary data was collected from books, research theses, articles and websites.

Characteristics of folk arts as communication media:

The energy of the folklore is to be oral, so that *John Brand* said that, 'folklore is a oral tradition'. the folk is the collection of experience, optimize life and life style of our fore fathers, therefore it gives a flavor of the new area, so that *Prof.Richard* told that a folklore is voice of the primitive people. Our traditional life already included folklore and also it is a mirror to the modern life, so it put a light on the behavior of the people, their tradition, values and cause to make a change. Simplicity, trust, experience and solution of the problem are the main features of folklore. So, it makes people to lead their life with cooperation.

We can find folklore tradition in villages very much, and this tradition is help full to aware people. This tradition has great influence on people because they can understand their culture of folklore very easily, so, that it has been used to create awareness among people in India.

Development Communication:

In the pre-independence era, Bala Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandiji have used folk arts to create awareness about their freedom fight messages. They used rural folklore like Maharashtra's *Tamasha*, Karnataka's *GeeGee* and ballads songs, Gujarat's *Bhavai, Nautanki* and *Kwala*, Bangla's *Jathra*, Tamil Nadu's *Therukattu*, Andrapradesha's *Bhurakatha* and so on.

Karnataka's *Harikatha* or *Kathakirthana* and puppetry shows were used to create awareness among people to know their value of Indian freedom. After freedom it has also used to create awareness among people about their law, effect of population explosion, use of literacy, road accident and effect of forgery signing etc.

In a developing country like India, how this folklore has been used with the modern techniques are also shown through the development communication to make the people aware of social issue. Folklore has been using the techniques like experience and the life style. These are the important things which should be included to make people aware of certain problems.

In the world, India is having a plenty of folk arts which we can find through participants of folk arts of each religion. These participants are mainly focusing on today's life of the people and to make aware of their origin and religion. They have been using folklore as important technique to appeal the people. Today this technique also has been used in TV to create awareness on their life condition, sanitation, their health problem and its solution, also educating through folklore. But today's newspapers, TV and radio should understand the use of folklore in daily life of people. So media personnel should understand the problems of the village and send the message through *Harikatha*. Today the mass communicators should understand the folklore history and use it as a technique to make people aware of their problems and solution to them.

Advantage of folk arts in development communication:

- Folklore is art of living, so it has relationship with people.
- Folk technique is easily accessible and user friendly to rural people.
- Folklore contains its own unique dances, songs and dramas etc. So people are enthusiastically participating in it.
- Folk art has a flexibility to adjust with everyone.
- Folk art gives a flavor of festival so people are automatically with it.
- Folklore is fulfilling the need of the people.

Harikatha:

Harikatha may be define as a versatile and a composite art in which a single person indulges in the act of dramatization, consisting all the vital components of the theatre craft such as music, dance and dramatic presentation of the themes. *Harikatha* is a solo recitation which is a combination of literature and lilting lyrics which reflects rich musical and literary material in its content. *Harikatha* is known in one form or the other with different names like *Katha*, *Katha Keerthan*, *Shiva Katha*, *Katha Kalashepam*, *Kathaprasangam keertan* and *Sankeertan* etc in the country.

The present form of *Harikatha* is believed to be 150 years old and existed even during the early sixteenth century. Most of the religious festivals and special occasions are marked by

'*Harikatha* programmes'. The medium of *Harikatha* is the cheapest and the simplest mode of communication. It is a theatre craft which does not require a stage, set, scenery, costumes and other paraphernalia.

The *Harikatha* artiste is accompanied by two or more members and wears a simple, casual dress. The principal performer is the chief singer narrator of the story and is called *Dasa* or *Keertankar*. He is accompanied by few artistes in background to give him vocal support. Musical instruments like the mridanga, the tabala, the violin, the harmonium and the cymbals are played by them while the *Keertankar* plays castanets (a two part chinking instrument made of wood).

One of its important characteristics is that it enables the artiste to alter the message according to the mood of the audience and in the process of face to face communication, gauge the impact of the message on them. If the impact is adverse, he is free to change or disband the course through smooth switch-over to the old stories.

The other characteristic is its secular nature. It should be clearly said '*Harikatha*' is non-ritualistic and may be staged on any occasion, religious or social. The theme is varied but it is usually centered on spiritual values and stories from Epics like Ramayana and the Mahabharata and Puranas or the Bible.

According to *Shankarappa Shastri*, we can see more than 20 mythological stories. Among them most of the stories belong to Ramayana and Mahabharata and they can be used to part by part according to the situation, and also Basavanna's stories, Goddess mythological kirthana's small stories, Chola Maharaja's, Kirathaka Sankanna's, Devaradasimaia's, Machi Mahadeva's, Bellavadi Channamma's, Akka Mahadevi's, Allama prabhu's, Bedara Kannappa's, Yadeuru Siddlingaiana purana, Renuka devi purana. It tells us the historical prominent role of religious leaders..

The duration of each performance may be from 1 hour 30 minute to whole night it takes place. In contemporary days, it has been used as a medium to make people aware of their sanitation, central and state government plans, environmental issues, effect of pollution, health sense, area cleanness, social evils like dowry, illiteracy, child labor, child education, importance nutrition food for children, importance of breast feeding and female baby abortion, major health deceases like HIV, dengue, polio etc . *Harikatha* artists like *G.R. Keshav Sharma, S.S Shivanda Shastri, Shankrappa Shastri and Hallappai Shastri* are doing appreciable job in creating awareness among people through *Harikatha*.

Government departments are using trained *Harikatha* artists. They deal the subject according to the training, which was given to them. Therefore, these people are doing great job to make people understand their life. For amusement of audience the artists use proverbs, idioms and critics.

Data Analysis:

For this study, the researcher has selected two villages from Shimoga district i.e. Chattanhalli and Melina Hanasawadi. He selected 15 respondents each from two villages. The

total sample for survey was 30 respondents. Among them 17 people (56.66%) were male and 13 people (43.33%) were female. All of them told that they know *Harikatha* very well.

When the researcher asked them, why do they like *Harikatha* in the era of folk modern mass media all of them told that folk arts were very near to them. Simple language used by *Harikatha* artists was another reason. About 43.33% (13 people) told that they like message of *Harikatha*, 30% (9 People) told it gives them message through mother tongue, most of them told it gives amusement and more number of people told that the language used by artist is understandable and rest of 26.66% (8 people) told that *Harikatha* artists and their art are familiar one.

When he asked whether folk performing arts are giving particular social and developmental message to audience, among 30 people, 83.33% (25 respondents) told yes, it gives a particular useful messages. Only 16.66% (5 respondents) told no, the folk arts are not giving any kind of message. 32% (8 persons) told that *Harikatha* spreads social responsibility, 36% (9 persons) told that it spreads religious thoughts, 8% (2 person) responded that it spreads political thoughts and 24% (6 persons) told that it spreads cultural themes. Here more number of respondents told that *Harikatha* is spreading religious thoughts.

About 96.66% (29 people) agreed that they receive the messages from *Harikatha* and 3.33% i.e. only one person disagreed with receiving message. Among 29 persons (93.10%) 27 persons told that *Harikatha* is our familiar folk art so we like to receive message. All respondents told that because of strong belief on *Harikatha* they receive messages. By this response we can assume that still people have strong belief on folklore.

Among 30 people, 66.66% (18 persons) told that folk is powerful media than any other media. Only 40% (12 persons) disagreed on it. Most of them responded that they love to listen to *Harikatha* because it has more importance than any other medium. Among 30 people 46.66% (14 persons) have received message like importance of literacy through *Harikatha*. Out of 30 persons, all of them told that they got information about government plans through *Harikatha*, 66.66% (18people) told they got health information through it, 40% (12 persons) told they got messages like protection of environment through it.

Suggestions to strengthen *Harikatha*:

- Government should give the supporting remuneration and life security to folk artists to enhance the folk program.
- NGO and other organizations should recognize the folk artist and give honor to them.
- To create awareness about the folk performing arts, youths should take training from original folk performers.
- Modern media should give importance to original folk performing artists.
- For publicity program, the government departments should include original folk performing artist to all propaganda.

- For spreading of any publicity program, government department should give training to folk artists from subject experts and make use of this folk art in the propaganda.
- Modern media should give support to folk media by supporting folklore. Mass media can give rebirth to folk media.

Conclusion:

Folklore and mass media have close relationships. Through folk arts only our great leaders pour their useful ideas to society. If we take an illustration like radio, TV and cinema all started on the base of folklore to give message to the society. Our education, social evils like dowry, green house effect, green revolution, deforestation, family planning and importance of literacy were through the folklore. So it is a powerful medium for the society to create awareness among people of India. India is a developing country with more number of illiterate people living in rural areas, we need folk arts to reach the common illiterate people of our country. Therefore, for the sake of Indian development we need to use folk arts like *Harikatha* in development communication.

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